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# Spotlight

# Strike the iron

By MARC MUNEAL

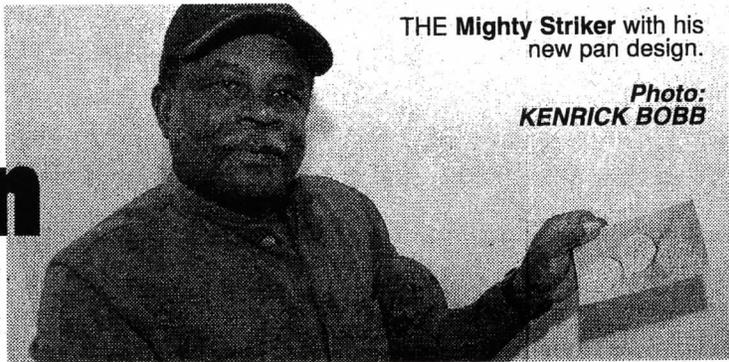
PERCY OBLINGTON, known as the Mighty Striker, has accomplished many firsts in his life.

The 71-year old calypsonian was one of the first panmen to read and write music: he learnt in the calypso tent from men like Cyril Diaz and Frankie Francis. In 1958 he won the first Dimanche Gras Calypso Monarch competition with "Don't Blame the PNM" and "Comparison". The following year, he won again—making him the first monarch to double-up. And Striker was also the buy-local king in 1965.

Now the veteran musician will add another notch to his belt. He has invented a new steelpan that he hopes will knock the music world for six: the Chord Master. This pan, which has not as yet been built, is comprised of three specially-tuned pans.

The real innovation, however, will be how it is played. In the right hand, the pannist holds a special stick that is really three sticks screwed on to a bridge at the bottom. Three sticks hit the pan with every movement of the right wrist.

One of the other pans is played with two sticks, and the



THE Mighty Striker with his new pan design.

Photo: KENRICK BOBB

third with one. Depending on the performer's dexterity or the type of sound desired, he plays one of these with the left hand. The Chord Master boasts 34 notes in the soprano range, and Striker claims it will be easier to play.

Though best known for calypso, Striker has a hard time saying whether calypso or pan is his greater love.

"I started in tamboo bamboo when I was just six years old. During the war, I joined the Starlight steelband in D'abadie, but after I formed my own band, the Nightingales."

"During the war we used to beat pan in Red Hill at Christmas. We had the little cooking oil pan as a lead, beating things like "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and the rest beating rhythm behind. My cousin used to be on the lead. I used to beat rhythm."

Problems in the band caused Striker to leave. He took up the guitar and that led to calypso. And that in turn led him to the two prestigious Monarch crowns and a slew of other titles. But

the singer left competition in 1961, disenchanted.

"I will never enter any kind of competition in Trinidad again unless foreigners judge it. Most of the local people, what is the phrase, curry favour. They feel that just because you old you should step aside and 'give the young people a chance'."

Competition might be behind him, but calypso isn't. He sings with the Tuco East Zone tent, and already has three compositions for 2002: "Answer to Shadow", "Women Leaders" and "Police Bandit".

Until then, Striker's is focused on his Chord Master. The new steelpan will be tuned by Patrick Worrell from Arouca. There's a hitch, though. When he went to register the invention with the Intellectual Property Office, he was asked to pay a fee of \$1500 and \$400 per annum. Luckily, Striker's friend, Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool", has promised to take the invention blueprints to America and have it registered there, where they hope it costs nothing.